

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 056149

FROM AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:SNAR, HO

SUBJECT:TALKS WITH TOP GOH OFFICIALS ON NARCOTICS CONTROL
IN HONDURAS
TEGUCIGALPA AND MEXICO FOR DEA
SUMMARY:

FOLLOWING UP ON CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MELGAR'S EXPRESSION
TO AMBASSADOR TODMAN OF HIS INTEREST IN CLOSER COLLABORATION
ON NARCOTICS CONTROL , THE DEA
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, OTHER DEA OFFICERS AND EMBOFF MET WITH
MELGAR'S TOP ADVISOR, CESAR BATRES AND OTHER GOH OFFICIALS
THIS WEEK. THE MEETINGS WERE AN OUTGROWTH OF MUTUAL CON-
CERN OVER INCREASED TRAFFICKING AND CONSEQUENT NARCOTICS-
RELATED CORRUPTION IN HONDURAS. GROUNDWORK WAS LAID FOR
REVISING A DRAFT NARCOTICS LAW, ESTABLISHING A SEPARATE
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NARCOTICS CONTROL GROUP, AND OTHER ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF ENFORCEMENT IN HONDURAS. THE EMBASSY
RECOMMENDS CONSIDERATION OF PRIORITY FOR TDY ASSIGNMENT
OF A DEA OFFICER TO TEGUCIGALPA TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH
THESE INITIATIVES AND EARMARKING \$50,000 FOR ASSISTANCE
TO THE GOH FOR STRENGTHENING AND REORGANIZING ITS NAR-
COTICS POLICE. END SUMMARY.

1. DEA REGIONAL DIRECTOR, JACQUES KIERE, OTHER DEA OFFICERS AND THE EMBASSY NARCOTICS COORDINATOR MET WITH

CESAR BATRES, THE CHIEF OF STATE'S PRINCIPAL ADVISOR, FEBRUARY 28 TO DISCUSS CLOSER US-GOH COOPERATION IN NARCOTICS CONTROL. THE MEETING TOOK PLACE AS A RESULT OF A DISCUSSION OF NARCOTICS MATTERS DURING ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN'S CALL ON CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MELGAR IN JANUARY 1978. AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO AND CESAR BATRES WERE PRESENT DURING THAT CALL. PROMPTED PERHAPS AS MUCH BY HIS OWN KNOWLEDGE OF HONDURAS CONNECTIONS IN AREA NARCOTICS TRADE AND HIS OWN SUSPICIONS OF DRUG-RELATED CORRUPTION IN THE GOH, AS BY AMBASSADOR TODMAN'S INFERENCES THAT HONDURAS WAS INVOLVED IN THIS ILLICIT TRADE, GENERAL MELGAR EXPRESSED A DESIRE THAT THE EMBASSY ESTABLISH LIAISON DIRECTLY WITH HIS CLOSEST ADVISOR, CESAR BATRES FOR THE PURPOSES OF DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE NARCOTICS CONTROL IN HONDURAS AND IN EXCHANGING INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION THERE. AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO HAD RESPONDED THAT WHILE THE EMBASSY HAS NO FULL-TIME NARCOTICS OFFICER, A FOLLOW-UP MEETING WOULD BE ARRANGED BETWEEN DEA OFFICERS AND BATRES TOWARD THESE ENDS. DUE TO A SHARP INCREASE IN THE INCIDENCE OF TRAFFICKING INVOLVING HONDURAS RECENTLY, THE EMBASSY HAD UNDERTAKEN TO SECURE SUCH CONFIDENTIAL

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HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION ON CONTROL EFFORTS. IT HAD GIVEN AMBASSADOR TODMAN A TALKING POINT GAUGED TO PRODUCE THIS DESIRED RESULT.

2. THE DISCUSSION WITH BATRES COVERED HONDURAS' DRAFT NARCOTICS LAW, ORGANIZATION FOR NARCOTICS CONTROL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT, TRAFFICKING, TRAINING AND SIGNS OF CORRUPTION. HE FIRST REFERRED TO AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO'S RECENT LETTER ON THE DRAFT LAW, ADDRESSED TO COLONEL JUAN ANGEL ARIAS, THE MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT AND JUSTICE. FYI: AN EMBOFF HAD HAND-CARRIED A "BLIND COPY" TO BATRES IN EARLY FEBRUARY BECAUSE OF DOUBTS ABOUT THE MINISTER'S DEDICATION TO NARCOTICS CONTROL. END FYI. THE LETTER MENTIONED PRIOR COMMUNICATIONS WITH COL. ARIAS ON THE DRAFT, THE NEED FOR SPECIFICATION OF A LESSER CRIME OF POSSESSION OF SMALL QUANTITIES FOR PERSONAL USE, THE EMBASSY'S REFERRAL OF THE DRAFT TO WASHINGTON FOR REVIEW, AND OUR HOPE THAT THERE WOULD BE TIME FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE RESULTS OF THIS REVIEW PRIOR TO PROMULGATION. BATRES COMMENTED THAT AS A FATHER OF FIVE CHILDREN HE HAD A PERSONAL CONCERN ABOUT NARCOTICS AND HE CONCURRED

IN THE NEED FOR SPECIFICATION OF LESSER PENALTIES
FOR MINOR INFRACTIONS. HE OFFERED TO ARRANGE A MEETING
FOR OUR GROUP WITH MINISTER ARIAS AND OTHERS COMPRISING

A COMMISSION TASKED WITH REVISING THE DRAFT LAW.
THIS VERY USEFUL MEETING TOOK PLACE LATER THAT MORNING.

3. BATRES ACKNOWLEDGED IN DISCUSSION ON ORGANIZATION,
STAFFING AND TRAINING THAT IT WAS DESIRABLE TO CREATE
A SEPARATE UNIT FOR ACTION AGAINST INTERNATIONAL
TRAFFICKING, WHICH WOULD REPORT DIRECTLY TO TOP GOH
OFFICIALS RATHER THAN TO THE DIN (INVESTIGATIVE POLICE)
OR TO THE FUSEP (INTERNAL SECURITY POLICE). HE
EXPRESSED INTEREST IN AND WAS INFORMED OF SERIOUS
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COMPROMISES OCCURRING IN THE PRESENT GOH ORGANIZATION
WHICH HAD FRUSTRATED ENFORCEMENT IN RECENT CASES.
WHEN TOLD OF DEA TRAINING PROGRAMS, HE INDICATED A
DESIRE TO HAVE AN IN-COUNTRY SCHOOL AND OTHER TRAINING,
ESPECIALLY IN CONNECTION WITH ESTABLISHING THE ABOVE,
INDEPENDENT NARCOTICS UNIT. HE ALSO SAID HE WOULD
LOOK INTO THE CASE OF AN INVESTIGATOR, RECENTLY TRAINED
AT THE DEA ADVANCED COURSE, WHO WAS RELIEVED OF HIS
NARCOTICS ASSIGNMENT WHEN HE CAME TOO CLOSE TO UNCOVER-
ING INVOLVEMENT OF GOH OFFICIALS. FINALLY, BATRES
WAS ADVISED OF SIGNS OF SIGNIFICANT INVOLVEMENT OF
HONDURAS IN NARCOTICS PRODUCTION, PROCESSING AND
TRAFFICKING. HIGHLIGHTS ARE THE USE OF A GOH AREO-
COMMANDER FOR IMPORTATION OF 463 KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE
BASE (ABORTED BY A COLOMBIAN POLICE AMBUSH), THE EXIS-
TENCE OF MAJOR COCAINE PROCESSING LABS, THE USE OF
HONDURAN-FLAG (COLOMBIAN-OWNED) VESSELS FOR LARGE
SHIPMENTS OF MARIJUANA TO THE US.

4. THE SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH THE GOH WORKING GROUP
TASKED WITH RE-CASTING THE DRAFT NARCOTICS LAW GAVE
DEA OFFICERS A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS
ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE DRAFT AND TO FACILITATE
INTERNATIONAL LEGAL COOPERATION. GOH PARTICIPANTS
WERE COL. ARIAS, COL. ERIN O'CONNOR, MINISTER OF INFOR-
MATION, AND LEGAL AND MEDICAL ADVISERS.

5. COMMENT: THE ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE OF SUBSTANTIAL
HONDURAN CONNECTIONS IN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING HAD,
WITHOUT DOUBT, GAINED THE ATTENTION OF GENERAL MELGAR
AND CESAR BATRES PRIOR TO AMBASSADOR TODMAN'S OBLIQUE
REFERENCE TO THE PROBLEM. THUS, THIS TIMELY APPROACH
PROMPTED THE DESIRED RESULT OF OPENING THE WAY FOR
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CLOSER COLLABORATION AND CONTROL. THE EMBASSY AND DEA OFFICERS FEEL ASSURED THAT MELGAR AND BATRES SERIOUSLY WANT TO TAKE STEPS TO BRING THIS ABOUT. THEY ARE PREOCCUPIED, HOWEVER, WITH MEDIATION WITH

EL SALVADOR, PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS AND OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS WHICH COULD FRUSTRATE THEIR GOOD INTENTIONS. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE EARLY TDY POSTING OF A DEA OFFICER AT TEGUCIGALPA AND AN OFFER OF LIMITED FUNDING FOR EQUIPMENT AND SALARY SUPPLEMENTS WOULD BE VITAL KEYS TO ACTION ON THESE INITIATIVES.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE DEPARTMENT AND DEA CONSIDER GIVING HIGH PRIORITY TO TDY ASSIGNMENT OF A DEA OFFICER IN TEGUCIGALPA AND CONSIDER EARMARKING APPROXIMATELY \$50,000 FOR EARLY USE IN SUPPORT OF GOH PLANS TO STEP UP AND REORGANIZE ITS NARCOTIC CONTROL EFFORT. CHRISTOPHER

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